

ADDITIONS TO THE CHURCH

NO. 1167

A SERMON
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.”
Acts 2:47.

WE are just coming to the most beautiful season of the year—spring—when everything around us is shaking off the chill grave clothes of winter, and putting on the beautiful array of a new life. The Church of God was in that condition at Pentecost; her winter was past, and the flowers appeared on the earth. She enjoyed the spring breezes, for the breath of the Holy Spirit refreshed her garden; there was spring music—the time of the singing of birds was come, for her preachers testified faithfully of Jesus! And so many and varied were the sweet notes which welcomed the new season, that many nations of men heard in their own tongue the wonderful works of God! There were, also, the spring blossoms—the fig tree put forth her green figs, and the vines with the tender grapes gave a good smell, and all around multitudes inquired, “Men and brethren, what must we do?” And many also avowed their faith in Jesus! There were the spring showers of repentance, the spring sunbeams of joy in the Holy Spirit, and the spring flowers of newly-given hope and faith! May we behold just such springtime in all the churches of Jesus Christ throughout the world! And meanwhile, let us awaken ourselves to so gladsome a season; let us rise up and meet the Well-Beloved, and in concert with Him let us sow in hope, and look for a speedy springing up! The Sun of righteousness is coming forth as a bridegroom out of His chamber, and the weary night is melting into welcome day—let us hear the Beloved’s voice as He cries to us, “Arise, My love, My fair one, and come away.”

It seems from the text that the additions to the church which were made in the Pentecostal springtime did not occur always in one form. Sometimes they came in crowds and at other times by gradual increase. Upon one day there were 3,000 added—that is an instance of conversion in the mass, when a nation is born at once! In such a work we are bound to believe; I mean not merely in the *possibility* of it, but in the *probability* of it, for it stands to reason that what should convince one man in a particular condition of heart would as readily convince 3,000 or 30,000 if they were in the same state! Granted the same soil, the same seed, the same season and the same wonder-working God—and I cannot imagine any reason why a limit should be set to results! The Holy Spirit is divine and consequently He knows how to influence all kinds of men, and He can, by the instrumentalities now in use, reach just as many as He pleases. I remember well, when I first preached in London, a remark made by a friend which very greatly encouraged me at the time, and has proved true in my experience. When he heard that my little country chapel had been filled by the inhabitants of the village in which I had preached, he gave me hope of filling a far larger place in London. “For,” he said, “what will draw 200 will draw 2,000, and what was useful to a few may be made just as useful to a multitude.” I saw at once that it was so. When we are dealing with *spiritual* forces, we have not to calculate by pounds and ounces, or by so many horse power; we have not to think of *quantity*! As an illustration—give me fire, I will not bargain for a furnace; give me but a single candle and a city or a forest may soon be in a blaze! A spark is quite sufficient to begin with, for fire multiplies itself. So give us the truth of God, a single voice and the Holy Spirit with it—and none can say where the sacred conflagration will end! One Jonah sufficed to subdue all Nineveh by one monotonous sentence often repeated! And in spite of the weakness of our present instrumentality, if God does but bless the gospel, there is no reason why it should not speedily be felt by the whole of London!

The sermon preached by Peter at Pentecost was the arrow of the Lord's deliverance to 3,000—there is no reason why the Lord should not cause one of ours to be the same! Three thousand cannot be converted if only a hundred are present to hear, but with this vast assembly, and thousands of smaller ones within gunshot, why should not the slain of the Lord be many? Assuredly the divine Comforter can as readily bless three millions as three individuals! But it would appear from our text that the additions to the Pentecostal church were not made in a mass at all times; the Spirit of God was still with them, but their increase was more gradual; "The Lord added to the church daily of such as should be saved." You have seen a heavy shower of rain in the spring—in a moment a big drop has fallen upon the pavement, and before you were ready to escape from it, a deluge followed, so plenteous that you half suspected a cloud had been torn in two right over your head! Such a sudden and impetuous shower may serve for a figure of the conversion of 3,000 souls at once. But at other times rain has fallen gently and has continued to descend hour by hour—a soft, warm, spring watering—which in its own way and fashion has done its work of blessing quite as surely as the heavier downpour. We must be very thankful if we do not see 3,000 converted in one day; if we see 300 every day for 10 days, or if we see 30 every day for a hundred days, we ought, indeed, to be grateful for all success so long as sinners really come to Jesus! Whether they come in troops, or one by one, we will welcome them! The woman who lost her money was glad to find one piece, although she would have been even *gladder* to have found a purse full if they had been lost.

I want you to think about additions to the church as they used to occur among the early Christians. Certain people are always talking about the "early church," and very strange notions they seem to have of the aforesaid early church. *Their* early church was very different from anything we meet with in the Acts of the Apostles, for it was very *particular* in its architecture, millinery, and music. Their "early church" could not worship at all unless it had a visible altar, with reredos and frontal, at which gentlemen in gorgeous attire of blue and scarlet and fine linen made many postures and not a few low bows! The "early church" of which they speak, it seems, believed in baptismal regeneration, transubstantiation, priestcraft, and sacramental efficacy! Well, that may or may not be, but there was an *earlier* church which had no such notions! And it is for us to get right away from any such early churches to the earlier church or the earliest church, and there, I guarantee you, you shall find no priestcraft, nor nonsense of sacramental efficacy! There was but simplicity, truth of God, and the power of the Holy Spirit! The early church, so much admired by Anglicans, was a degenerate vine, a field of wheat and tares, a mass leavened with antichristian error—in a word—baptized heathenism! After its own fashion, it set up, again, the many deities of the heathen, only calling them *saints* instead of gods—putting the Virgin into the place of Venus, and setting up Peter or Paul in the niches formerly occupied by Saturn or Mars! Our present "revived early church" is only paganism with a border of crosses! We are resolved to return to the *primitive* church of which we read, "then they that gladly received the word were baptized, and they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine." In connection with this church we shall handle our subject, trusting to the Holy Spirit to be with us as He was with them!

I. First, then, ADDITIONS TO THE CHURCH, WHAT ABOUT THEM? "The Lord added to the church daily of such as should be saved." *It seems to have been the custom in the earliest times for persons who had been converted to Christ to join themselves with the church of Jesus Christ.* From that fact, I feel persuaded that they did not conceal their convictions. It is a strong temptation with many to say, "I have believed in Jesus, but that is a matter between God and my own soul; there can be no need that I should tell this to others. Can I not quietly go to heaven and be a Nicodemus, or a Joseph of Arimathea?" To which I reply, Yes, you can quietly go to heaven, and we hope you will do so, but that is a different thing from being cowardly and *ashamed of Christ!* We shall not object to your being a Nicodemus if you will go with him when he carries spices to the grave of Jesus; and you may be a Joseph of Arimathea if you will attend him when he goes boldly in unto Pilate and begs for the body of Jesus! Neither of these two brothers was cowardly after the cross had been set up before their eyes! Neither were they ashamed to identify themselves with Christ crucified. Follow them, not in the infancy of their love, but in its mature days! Remember, dear friends, the promise of the gospel runs thus—"He that with his heart believes, and with his mouth makes confession of Him, shall be saved." Do not, I charge you, neglect

one half of the command! The gospel commission which we have received is this—"Go you into the entire world and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believes and is baptized shall be saved." That is the message as we find it. We did not insert the clause concerning baptism, neither dare we leave it out, or advise you to neglect it! I give you the very words of the Savior. Do not, therefore, divide the gospel command in order to throw half of it behind your back, but believe both and acknowledge your belief, and be added to the church! It is quite clear, too, that believers in those days did not try to go to heaven *alone*. There has been a great deal said in these latter days about being simply a Christian and not joining any particular church—a piece of cant mostly—and in all cases a mistake!

In the name of unity this system is preached up, and yet it is clear to all that it is the *reverse* of unity, and is calculated to put an end to all visible church fellowship! The good people mentioned in our text joined themselves with the church of God in Jerusalem at once. I dare say that even in those days, had they criticized the church, they would have found faults in her; certainly within a few weeks great faults had to be remedied, but these converts felt that the society at Jerusalem was the church of Christ, and therefore, they joined themselves to it. All of you can meet with churches of Jesus Christ if you choose to look for them. If you wait for a *perfect* church, you must wait until you get to heaven! And even if you could find a perfect assembly on earth, I am sure they would not admit you to their fellowship, for you are not perfect yourself. Find out those people who are nearest to the Scriptures—who hold the truths of God in doctrine and in ordinance, and are most like the apostolic church, and then cast in your lot with them and you will be blessed in the deed. Consider the matter, and reflect that if it would be right for *you* to remain out of church fellowship, it must be right for every other believer to remain in the same condition! And then there would be no visible church on earth at all, and no body of people banded together to maintain the Christian ordinances! Christian fellowship, especially in the breaking of bread and the maintenance of an evangelistic ministry, would become impossible if no one openly avowed the Savior's cause! Act, then, according to your duty, and if you are a Christian, join with Christians. If you love the Master, love the servants; if you love the Captain, unite with the army and join that regiment of it which you think cleaves closest to the Master's word.

Observe next, that *the persons who were reached at Pentecost were added to the church by the Lord*. Does anybody else ever add to the church? Oh, yes, the *devil* too often thrusts in his servants! Who was it that added Judas, Ananias and Sapphires, and Simon Magus and Demas to the church? Who was it that stole forth by night and cast tares among the wheat? That evil spirit is not dead! He is still busy enough in this department and continually adds to the church those who are not saved. His are the mixed multitude which infest the camp of Israel, and are the first to fall a lusting; his is the Achan who brings a curse upon the tribes; his are those of whom Jude says, "Certain men crept in unawares who were before of old ordained to this condemnation." These adulterate the church, and by so doing they weaken and defile it, and bring it much grief and dishonor. When the *Lord* adds to the church, that is quite another matter! Moreover, the church, itself, cannot avoid adding some who should not be received. With the greatest possible care and prudence we shall still make mistakes, and some are thus added whom the Lord never added to the church. You have heard Mr. Hill's story of meeting a man in the street one night who hiccupped up to him and said, "How do you do, Mr. Hill? I am one of your converts." "Yes," said Rowland, "I should say you are, but you are none of God's, or else you would not be drunk." Converts of that sort are far too numerous! Converts of the preacher; converts of friends, or converts of a certain fashion of making profession are not true-born children of the Lord!

Dear friends, I invite all of you who are thinking about joining the church to search and see whether you are such as the Lord would add to a church. If you are, you have been converted by the Lord; you have been wounded by the Lord, and you have been healed by the Lord. And in the Lord is your righteousness and trust. It has not been man's doing, whoever may have been the instrument; the Holy Spirit has worked all your works in you; you must have been the subject of a divine agency! Something more than you could do for yourself, or any man could do for you, must have been worked in you by the Lord! He who made you has made you new! Oh, dear friends who love the Lord, join in earnest prayer that the Lord would add to the church daily the saved ones, for we long for such! Then, *additions to the church of a right kind are described in the text by the words, "such as should be saved."* Only those

words are not quite a correct translation of the original. I suppose they were borrowed from the vulgar Latin—they are not in the Greek. The translation should be either, “The Lord added to the church daily the saved,” or, “The Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.” *Saved* persons were added to the church—and only such are *fit* to be added! We are not authorized to receive into our number those who *desire* to be saved, as certain brethren do; I commend their design in so doing, but I am sure they have not Scripture for it! Those who are being saved, in whom the work of salvation is really begun, are the only proper candidates—and these are spoken of in the 44th verse as “believers.”

The proper persons to be added to the visible church of Christ are those who *believe* to the salvation of their souls. They are they who are, from day to day, experiencing the saving power of the name of Jesus by being delivered from sin; they are being saved from the customs of the world, and are being saved in the sense of sanctified from the various corruptions and lusts which rule among the sons of men. These are the sort of persons who should be added to the church. So let the question go round—Am I saved? Have I believed in Jesus? If I have, the process of salvation within me is going on; I am being delivered from the reigning, ruling power of sin each day; I am being kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, and I shall be kept and presented at last, spotless before the presence of God with exceeding joy! We set the door wide open to all who are saved, however little their faith may be! The church has no right to exclude any of the saved because their knowledge or experience is not that of advanced believers. If they believe in Jesus and are saved, the babes are of the family and ought to be received. The lambs belong to the flock and ought not to be kept outside the fold. Church membership is not a *certificate* of advanced Christianity—it is simply the recognition of the profession of saving faith in Jesus Christ. May the Lord add to this church many of the saved! And may we sit at the Lord’s Table together and sing of redeeming grace and dying love, as those who love the Savior! Come here, you who are the Lord’s little ones, but stay far from here you unbelievers and unregenerate!

Again the text says, “The Lord *added* to the church daily such as should be saved.” They were really “*added*” to the church. I am afraid certain persons’ names are added to the church, but they themselves are not! They increase our numbers; they are added like figures on a slate, but they do not augment our *strength*. The church is a vital body, and to add to a vitalized body requires a divine operation. The church is like a tree—if you want to add to a tree, you cannot take a dead bough and *tie* it on—that is not adding to it, but encumbering it! To add to a tree there must be *grafting* done, which requires skill, and the branch, itself alive, must be knit to the living trunk by a living junction so that the vital sap of the tree flows into the grafted bough. A true church is a living thing, and only *living* men and women made alive by the Spirit of God are fit to be grafted into it—and the grafting must be made by the Lord Himself—otherwise it is no true addition to the Church of God! Some members are only tied on to the church—they are neither useful nor ornamental, as a dead bough fastened to a tree would add no beauty to it and would certainly bring forth no fruit. There must be a *living* union, so that the life which is in the church shall join with the life that is in the man, and the one life of the one quickening Spirit shall flow through the whole of the body! When I hear professors railing at the churches to which they belong; when I see disunion and disaffection among church members, I can well understand that the Lord never added them! And it would be a great mercy to the church if the Lord would take them away. When the Lord adds them, added they are for time and for eternity, and they can say to the church, “Where you dwell I will dwell; your people shall be my people, for your God is my God.”

One more point in the text is this, that “the Lord added to the church *daily* such as should be saved.” There were additions to the church every day! Some churches, if they have an addition once in 12 months make as much noise over that one as a hen does when she has laid an egg! Now, in the early church they would not have been content with so small an increase; they would have gone weeping and mourning all over Jerusalem if there had been additions but once in the year! But, cries one, “If we have an addition every month, is not that enough?” Well, it is enough for *some* people, but when hearts are warm and full of love to Christ, we want Him to be praised from the rising of the sun unto the going down of the same—and we long to have added to the church *daily* of such as are saved—and why not? “But,” you reply, “we are not daily *preaching*.” That may be, but we ought to be! If not daily in the pulpit, there should be the daily preaching of the *life*, and if all the members of the church were daily teach-

ing of Jesus Christ from house to house, a daily sowing would bring a daily reaping! If we were daily *praying* with earnestness, and daily using every effort we could by the power of the Holy Spirit—and if daily the church abode in fellowship with her Master, we would soon see added to it daily of those who are saved! “Why do we not see it,” asks one, “in many churches?” Why? Because many churches do not believe in it! If there were many converts added to them, they would say, “Yes, we hear of a great many additions, but what are they? We hope they will hold on or some such ungenerous remark! If to some churches there should come a large increase, there are brethren who would not believe it to be genuine, and would despise the little ones! God will not cause His children to be born where there are none to nurse them; He will be sure not to send converts to churches which do not want them! He will not have His lambs snarled over as if they were so many young wolves, and kept out in the cold by months together to see whether they will howl or bleat! He loves to see His people watchful *for* new converts and watchful *over* them. The Good Shepherd would have us feed His lambs, gather them in from the cold field of the world, and carry them to some warm sheltered place—and nurture them for Him. When He sees a church ready to do that, *then* will He send them His lambs, but not till then!

II. That brings me to the second point, which is this—ADDITIONS TO THE CHURCH—UNDER WHAT CONDITIONS MAY WE EXPECT THEM ON A LARGE SCALE? Turn to the chapter, again, and we shall have our answer. We may expect additions to every Church of God on a large scale when she has, first of all, *a Holy Spirit ministry*. Peter was, no doubt, a man of considerable natural abilities; he was also a warm-hearted, fervent man, just such a one as would have power over his fellow men because of the enthusiasm which dwelt in him. But for all this, Peter had never seen 3,000 persons converted until he had been baptized with the Holy Spirit! After the tongue of fire had sat upon Peter’s head, he was another man from what he had ever been before! If, dear brothers and sisters, we are to see large multitudes converted, the power of the preacher must lie in his being filled with the Holy Spirit! I fear that many churches would not be content with a ministry whose power would lie solely in the Holy Spirit. I mean this—that they judge a minister by his elaboration of *style* or beauty of imagery, or degree of culture; and if he is a man of such refined speech that only a select few can understand him—he is a favorite with what is considered to be “a respectable church.” Many despise a preacher whom the common people hear gladly—who uses great plainness of speech and discards the words which man’s wisdom teaches. They complain that he is only fit to address the ragtag of the people, and for this they turn their backs on him; they want not the fire of the *Spirit*, but the flash of oratory! Not the rushing wind of the Holy Spirit, but the perfumed zephyrs of “high culture!”

The jingle of rhetoric has more attraction for them than the certain sound of the trumpets of the sanctuary. May God have mercy upon the church that has got into such a miserable state and is so lacking in true education—for where a church is educated by the Lord, she understands that salvation is *not* by might nor by power—but by the Spirit of God! Plainness of speech is the perfection of gospel utterance, for the Master Himself so spoke. Men of studied elocution, who can pile up a climax and cap it with a dainty piece of poetry, are not the men whom God the Holy Spirit honors to be soul-winners! Have you not heard fine orations which have perfectly charmed you by their beauty, and yet after you have heard them you have felt that if the Lord did bless such sermons to the conversion of anybody it would be a novelty upon the face of the earth, for there was little of Christ in them, and none of the unction of the Holy One? Great sermons are often great sins—and “intellectual treats” are frequently a mess of savory pottage made of unclean meats! A Holy Spirit ministry, if Peter is the model, is one which is bold, clear, telling, persuasive—one which tells men that Jesus is the Christ, and that they have crucified Him—and calls upon them to repent and turn unto the Lord! The truly sent preacher speaks out straight, plain, and home to the conscience, whether men will hear or whether they will not! The Holy Spirit minister chooses Jesus for His main theme, as Peter did. He did not speak to them about modern science and the ways of twisting Scripture into agreement with it; he cared nothing for the maundering of the Rabbis or the philosophies of the Greeks. Peter went right on setting forth Christ crucified and Christ risen from the dead! When he had preached Christ, he made a pointed personal appeal to his hearers, and said, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you!” He was not afraid to give such an exhortation! He was not like some who say, “We must warn sinners and then leave them; we may preach Christ to them but may

not bid them repent.” Peter came boldly forth with the gospel exhortation and left it to his Master to send it home by the power of the Holy Spirit! That was the sort of sermon which God blesses. The man was full of God, and God shone through the man and worked with him! Remission of sins was sought for and was found through repentance and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ by a vast number of souls! May God send to all His churches a Holy Spirit ministry!

But if there are to be many additions to the church it must, next, be a *Holy Spirit* church. Note that! What is a Holy Spirit church? Well, it is a church baptized into His power and this will be known, first, by its being *steadfast*. Read the 42nd verse—“And they continued steadfast.” He will not bless a church which is excited and then relapses, is carried away by every novelty and does not know what it believes. A church which abides in Jesus and in His truth will be blessed of God! They were steadfast in four points. *In the apostle’s doctrine*; they were a doctrinal church. They believed in being steadfast in fixed truth—they did not belong to the shifty generation of men who plead that their views are progressive, and that they cannot hold themselves bound by a plain creed. Dear brothers and sisters, never give up the grand old truths of the gospel! Let no excitement; even though it is the whirlwind of a revival, ever sweep you off your feet concerning the great doctrines of the cross. If God does not save men by His truth, He certainly will not save them by lies! And if the old gospel is not competent to work a revival, then we will do without the revival! We will keep to the old truths of God, anyhow; come what may! Our flag is nailed to the mast!

Next they were steadfast *in fellowship*. They loved each other, and they continued doing so. They conversed with one another about the things of God, and they did not give up the converse. They helped each other when they were in need, and they continued in such generosity; they were true brethren and their fellowship was not broken. Next they continued *in the breaking of bread*, which is a delightful ordinance and never to be despised or under-estimated. As often as they could, they showed Christ’s death till He should come. They delighted to enjoy the dear memorials of His sacred passion, both in the assembly and from house to house. They remained also steadfast *in prayer*. Mark that! God cannot bless a church which does not pray—and churches must increase in supplication if they would increase in strength. Sacred importunity must besiege the throne of God and then the blessing will be yielded. Oh, children of the heavenly King! You hamper the Spirit and hinder the blessing if you restrain prayer! Here were four points, then, in which the church was steadfast—and God blessed it.

Note next that it was a *united* church. We read of them that they were so united that they had all things in common, and they continued daily with one accord in the temple. There were no parties among them, no petty strifes and divisions; they loved the Lord too well for that. The Sacred Dove takes His flight when strife comes in; if you divide the church within itself, you also divide it from the mighty operations of the Spirit of God! Be full of love to one another and then you may expect that God the Holy Spirit will fill you with blessing. They were a *generous* church as well as a united church. They were so generous that they threw their property into a common stock lest any should be in need. They were not communists, they were Christians—and the difference between a communist and a Christian is this—a communist says, “All yours is mine,” while a Christian says, “All mine is yours.” And that is a very different thing! The one is for *getting*, and the other for *giving*. These believers acted in such a generous spirit, one to the other, that it seemed as if nobody accounted that what he had belonged to himself, but generously gave of it to the necessities of others! I do not believe the Lord will ever bless a stingy church. There are churches whose minister has to anxiously inquire how he shall provide food and raiment for his household, and yet these churches are not very poor. There are churches where more is paid per annum for cleaning the shoes of the worshippers than they spend upon the cause of Christ! And where this is the case, no great good will be done; the Lord will never bless a synagogue of misers—if they are churls they may keep their worship to themselves, for God is a generous God, and He loves to have a generous people. Again, these people were in such a condition that *their meals and homes were holy places*. I want you to notice this, that they were breaking bread from house to house, and did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart. They did not think that religion was meant only for Sundays and for what men, nowadays, call the house of God. Their own houses were houses of God, and their own meals were so mixed and mingled with the Lord’s Supper that to this day the most cautious

student of the Bible cannot tell when they left off eating their common meals, and when they began eating the supper of the Lord. They elevated their meals into diets for worship—they so consecrated everything with prayer and praise that all around them was holiness unto the Lord! I wish our houses were thus dedicated to the Lord, so that we worshipped God all the day long, and made our dwellings temples for the living God.

A great dignitary, not long ago, informed us that there is great efficacy in daily prayer in the parish church. He even asserted that however few might attend, it was more acceptable than any other worship. I suppose that prayer in the parish church with nobody to join in it except the vicar and the beadle is far more effectual than the largest family gathering in the house at home! This was evidently his lordship's idea and I suppose the literature which his lordship was best acquainted with was of such an order as to have led him to draw that inference! Had he been acquainted with the Bible and such old-fashioned books, he would have learned rather differently. And if someone should make him a present of a New Testament, it might, perhaps, suggest a few new thoughts to him! Does God need a house? He who made the heavens and the earth—does He dwell in temples made with hands? What crass ignorance is this! No house beneath the sky is more holy than the place where a Christian lives, eats, drinks, sleeps and praises the Lord in all that he does! And there is no worship more heavenly than that which is presented by holy families devoted to His fear! To sacrifice home worship for public worship is a most evil course of action! Morning and evening devotion in a cottage is infinitely more pleasing in the sight of God than all the cathedral pomp which delights the carnal eye and ear! Every truly Christian household is a church—and as such it is competent for the discharge of any function of divine worship, whatever it may be! Are we not all priests? Why do we need to call in others to make devotion a *performance*? Let every man be a priest in his own house! Are you not all kings if you love the Lord? Then make your houses palaces of joy and temples of holiness! One reason why the early church had such a blessing was because her members had such homes. When we are like they were, we shall have “added to the church daily of the saved.”

I have already mentioned that they were a *praying* church and that accounted greatly for the increase. They were a *devout* church, a church which did not forget any part of the Lord's will. They were a baptized church, and they were a bread-breaking church, so that they were obedient to Christ in both ordinances. They were also a *joyful* church. We find that they ate their meat with gladness. Their religion was not of the somber hue which comes of doubting and fearing; they were believers in a risen Redeemer and though they knew that they would soon be persecuted, they so rejoiced that everybody could read heaven shining on their faces, and might have known that they believed in the blessed gospel, for they were a blessed people! They were also a *praising* church, for it is said they “praised God, and they had favor with all the people.” Oh, may the Lord make this church and all the churches around us to be as holy and joyful as that apostolic community!

III. I must conclude with words upon that which I wanted most of all to say—WHAT RESPONSIBILITIES DO THESE ADDITIONS TO THE CHURCH BRING TO US? To you who are to be added to the church tonight, and I thank God you are so many, it involves this responsibility: Do not come in among us unless you are saved! Judge yourselves with honesty; examine yourselves with care, and although you have gone as far as you have, yet tonight, before I give you the right hand of fellowship, if you are conscious that you are not what you profess to be, I do beseech you stand back! If you are the weakest of the weak, and the feeblest of the feeble, yet, if you are sincere, come and welcome! But if you are not sincere, do not add to your sin by taking upon you a profession which you cannot keep up, and by declaring a lie before the Lord—for if you do so, remember you will not have lied unto man, but unto God, Himself—in daring to declare yourselves Christians while you are unbelievers!

Come and welcome if you are believers! And when you come, remember that the responsibility which you undertake in God's strength is that you live to prove that you have really given yourself up to the church—that you mean to serve Christ with all your heart—that you will seek to promote the holiness and unity of the church which you join, and will strive to do nothing to dishonor her good name or to grieve the Spirit of God. In joining the church, pray to be continued steadfast in doctrine and fellowship; pray for more divine grace, that you may be filled with the Spirit of God. Do not come in to weak-

en us—we are weak enough, already! Do not come in to adulterate our purity—we have enough impurity even now! Pray that God may make you a real increase to our prayerfulness, to our holiness, to our earnestness, to our higher life—and then come and welcome, and the Lord be with you!

As for us who shall receive the converts, what is our responsibility? First, to welcome them heartily! Let us open wide the door of our hearts and say, “Come and welcome,” for Jesus Christ’s sake. After welcoming them we must watch over them; and when so many are added, double care is needed. Of course, no two pastors can possibly watch over this vast assembly of 4,500 professed believers. Let the watching be done by *all* the members—by the officers of the church, first, and then by every individual. I am very thankful that out of the cheering number to be brought in tonight the larger proportion belong to the families of the church. My brothers and sisters already in Christ, it is fortunate for these young people that they have you to watch over them! Never let it be said that any parent discourages his child, that any guardian discourages the young after they have come forward and acknowledged their faith! If you notice faults, remember you have faults, yourselves. Do not tauntingly throw their failing in their teeth as some have unkindly done; guide them and cheer them on; help their weakness; bear with their ignorance, impetuosity and correct their mistakes. I charge you, my beloved sisters, be nursing mothers in the church! And you, my brothers, be fathers to these young people that they may be enabled by your help, through God’s Spirit, to hold on their way! It is an evil thing to receive members and never care for them afterwards. Among so many some must escape our supervision, but if *all* the members of the church were watchful, this would not be; each would have someone to care for him; each one would have a friend to whom to tell his troubles and his cares. Watch over the church, then, I pray you.

And you elder ones, myself chiefly among you, let our example be such as they can safely follow! Let them not come into the church to find us cold; let us try, as we see these young ones coming among us, to grow young again in heart and sympathy. In receiving these new members we ought to have, dear brothers, an access of new strength and a more vigorous life. The church ought to be giving out more light, for here are fresh lamps! She should be doing more for Christ—here are new workers! She should be herself stronger, more daring, and more useful—for here are bold soldiers newly enlisted! I think, as I see new converts brought in, I see the Lord lighting up new stars to gladden this world’s night! I see Him swearing in new soldiers to fight Christ’s battles! I see Him sending out new sowers to sow the plains of the world for the ever-glorious harvest, and I bless and praise and magnify His name with gladness of soul! Heavenly Father, keep them, yes, keep us all, lest any of us, though added to the church on earth, should not be added to the church in heaven! Keep us so that when the muster-roll is read for the last time, we who have had our names inscribed among the saints on earth may find them written among the blessed in heaven! May God grant it, and He shall have all the glory. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—ACTS 2.

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—96, 451, 972.

Adapted from *The C. H. Spurgeon Collection*, Version 1.0, Ages Software.

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